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A NEW RACE OF PTARMIGAN FROM ALASKA

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In working up the results of his extensive surveys in the Auelians, O. J. Murie commented on the grayer appearance of four ptarmigans from Chuginadak Island, one of the Four Mountain group, and stated that specimens were needed for critical studies of this species in this part of the chain, from Amukta and Yunaska, islands to the west across a wide and deep pass. These islands are separated from Segaum by wide Amukta Pass, and all three—Segaum, Amukta, and Yunaska—are large enough and rough enough to provide suitable ptarmigan habitat. Gabrielson has visited all three (Amukta, June 25, 1940, and June 1, 1946; Yunaska, June 24, 1946; and Segaum, June 29, 1946). He and others of the party saw four Rock Ptarmigan on Yunaska, the only sight of these birds on the three islands in the course of these visits. All were wild, but one, an adult male in post-nuptial plumage, was obtained.

This specimen has been compared with birds from Atka to the west, Chuginadak and Unalaska Islands to the east, and is distinctly different from those on any adjoining area. Although only the one specimen is available, it is so distinctly different that we have no hesitation in naming it as:

Lagopus mutus yunaskensis sub. sp. nov.

Type specimen adult male No. 5583, collection of Ira N. Gabrielson, taken at Yunaska Island, June 24, 1946. Measurements.—Wing 193 mm.; tail 112 mm.; bill from anterior edge of nostril 8 mm.; width at gape 12 mm.; height at gonys 7.50 mm.

In general appearance, *yunaskensis* is nearest to *L. m. nelsoni* but it is much paler and grayer than the grayest specimens in a large series of that race. The back is much less reddish in tone due to the replacement of the fine bars and vermiculations of clove brown by a few even finer brown bars and more scattered vermiculations of cinnamon buff on a much lighter ground color which is almost ashy on the feathers of the lower back. The throat is white, and the breast is slaty with bars of buff or almost white, especially on the ends of the feathers. In comparable plumage, the breast of *nelsoni* is black with numerous clove brown bars.

When compared to *atkensis* to the west, it is darker throughout, although resembling it in the fine feather markings and the general grayish color of the back. It is, however, darker on the head, breast,

and back than any of the corresponding plumages in a large series of that race.

The four males from Chuginadak are, as Murie pointed out, more grayish and less reddish, especially on the lower back and upper tail coverts, but on the breast they are almost as dark as *nelsoni*. They may represent the darkest variation of *yunaskensis* or they might be considered as the variant of *nelsoni* that approaches most nearly the pale races of the central Aleutians. Additional specimens from Yuaska and Amukta as well as from Herbert or Carlisle (where Gabrielson flushed one bird at long range on July 2, 1946) are needed to determine this relationship.